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ABSTRACT

One of the priority areas for study in the University-Urban Inteface Program at the University of Pittsburgh is community goals as they relate to metropolitan governance. This report includes some of the findings of the Pittsburgh Goals Study organized from data gathered through a questionnaire sent to key Pittsburgh community leaders. These leaders were asked to discuss their views about the future of the city and to consider the desirability, likelihood, and importance of 28 possible future changes in the community. This report focuses on the responses to the prospect of the development of metropolitanism. The research suggests several impediments to change in the city government. This negativism is offset by the concern of the leaders involved in the study, their receptiveness to change, and their basic agreement in terms of the main directions which changes in Pittsburgh should take. See SO 004 802 for related documents. (Author/SHM)

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UNIVERSITY-URBAN INTERFACE PROGRAM

PITTSBURGH GOALS: NOTES ON METROPOLITANISM

FEBRUARY 24, 1972

by

Jiri Nehnevajsa

This paper was prepared for presentation at the February 24, 1972 University of Pittsburgh Community-University Forum on Metropolitan Government.

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PITTSBURGH GOALS: NOTES ON METROPOLITANISM

By Jiri Nehnevajsa

I would like to take this opportunity to discuss with you some of the findings of the Pittsburgh Goals Study as they bear on the issue of metropolitan governance. Almost a year ago, the data may now be obsolete, we asked some 200 prominent Pittsburgh leaders to respond to a mailed questionnaire in which we asked them to consider the coming five years, and to reveal their views about the future of the city for a five-year period. We asked about 28 types of changes which seemed then most salient, and we sought the views of the leaders as to the desirability, likelihood, and importance of such changes. We also wanted to acquire information about what might be done to bring about the desirable transformations, or prevent the unwanted ones.

I will base my remarks on the views of 106 of these community leaders. They are not necessarily representative of all of the community leadership; they are not necessarily speaking on behalf of the governmental, public or private agencies and organizations in which they occupy leadership positions. But they are, by any standard we choose to adopt, among the key leaders of the community.

The "emergence" of metropolitan governance was one of 28 Pittsburgh prospects about which these leaders were asked. To sum up the central result: the issue ranks fifteenth in desirability, sixteenth in importance. It is also least probable of all the 28 major alternatives, at least over the next five year period. Metropolitanism is quite desirable, although not extremely so. It is seen as quite important, although not more so than 15 other priorities. In fact, metropolitan governance as a prospect ranks in desirability among the top five Pittsburgh concerns

only among the black community program leaders, and among leaders of religious social service programs. While this does not strike us as surprising with regard to the leaders in religion, the finding concerning black leadership is somewhat unexpected if only due to the fact that a shift to governance patterns of the postulated kind must amount to dilution of the still limited, though growing political power of the blacks. It would appear that metropolitan governance should not be particularly favored by leaders involved in black community developmental efforts.

The explanation in this case is simple enough, and it bears on a limitation which I had stated at the outset: the response rate among black community leaders to our questionnaire was among the lowest, higher only than that of labor leaders. Subsequent checks reveal that the issue of metropolitanism is, in effect, quite divisive within the Pittsburgh black community. In other words, our results overestimate favorableness because they are, in this respect, not sufficiently representative of the spectrum of black community concerns.

In turn, metropolitanism is rated far below the average desirability by leaders in anti-poverty programs, many of whom themselves are black, media leaders, and environment control leadership.

If the issue may divide the black community, it is thus also likely to divide, at least initially, the rest of the Pittsburgh leadership. It is one of the important community concerns on which much more homework in the way of ongoing dialogues needs to be undertaken before one would attempt to move ahead in the way of policy options, lest we would be willing to accept a high level of community cleavage and conflict. It is a sensitive topic, at least as far as our study reveals.

The likelihood estimates underscore this observation. In no group of leaders does metropolitan governance rank higher than 26th among the 28 issues as to its likelihood. Here, a classic case of a future which is desired by many (and unwanted at the same time by quite a few as well)--a future which is desired but believed to be highly unlikely. We would have to conclude that most people would not bother about unlikely things, and that the potential for mobilizing segments of the community on one side or another is therefore limited.

This is, however, not the case. When we asked the community leaders to comment in more qualitative detail on the three issues they thought were particularly crucial, more than 30 per cent of them selected "metropolitanism" as one of these issues, and they selected this problem by far more than any other. Thus the "unlikelihood" is more of an expression of "hopelessness" than it is a realistic assessment of improbabilities, and the consequence is, indeed, that the issue of "metropolitan governance" is with us and will be with us whether we like it or not. It is not an issue that we can ignore, whether we favor or disfavor it. Somehow we have to come to grips with it. Beyond any doubt, the problem is "there." Whether the leaders and Pittsburgh residents and metropolitan area residents now take a positive or negative view toward it, only the discourse of the coming years can resolve the actual future in this regard.

There are a few major qualitative points which I would like to add. They are based on the open-ended reactions of these community leaders who chose to comment on "metropolitanism" quite specifically.

One, by far most of the community leaders think in terms of "Allegheny County" as the governance area rather than in terms of "metropolitan Pittsburgh" or the larger regional complex. This may simplify matters for the purposes of some policy discussions, but it is likely to complicate

any technical problems which would be involved should one seek to move in the direction of any form of metropolitanism.

Two, all of the leaders feel that the roads toward motropolitanism involve rather small steps at first. Thus there is no sense of urgency or immediacy, nor an overwhelming feeling that everything, even if desired, must be accomplished at once. A gradualist approach is distinctly favored, indeed, advocated.

Three, many of the leaders favor steps toward functional integration of certain activities and services, the obvious ones involving law enforcement, fire services, sewage, water, purchasing of supplies and the like.

Four, quite a few of the leaders feel that, at the outset, perhaps only a few municipalities might get together rather than all of them at once. But also, some of the leaders argue that a plan leading toward metropolitan governance must include from the very first all of the relevant municipalities or it cannot succeed at all.

Five, by far most of the leaders see major fiscal savings and salutory planning implications (for instance, with regard to planning low-income housing) of metropolitanism, so that the "efficiency" criterion is seen as quite central. But a few of the leaders warn against actually increased costs in at least some areas of life. For instance, metropolitan fire fighting forces may turn out to be more costly than the present system simply because quite a few municipalities can, or do, still rely on a volunteer, and low-cost, fire fighting department.

Six, these Pittsburgh leaders are convinced that the mayors and councilmen in the various municipalities are opposed to any kind of metropolitanism, and that this is one of the major obstacles to a change in such a direction.

Seven, by far most of the leaders are also sure that the major political parties, both Republican and Democratic, throughout the metropolitan region are similarly opposed, and this, too, is cited as a major impediment.

Eight, many of the leaders feel that citizens in municipalities around Pittsburgh would also not welcome a change which would entail the loss of their local "autonomy" and perhaps drain some funds from the richer coffers of some of the suburbs into the less controllable governance of a larger region.

Nine, many of the leaders believe that progress toward metropolitanism is likely to be impaired if the city of Pittsburgh provides the impetus for it, or the institutional leadership, or both. In sum, they would feel that more can be done if the initiative were to come from outside of Pittsburgh, from outside of the major political parties, and from outside of the established agencies of government.

In this regard, the picture is rather bleak. For if this were true--at least to the extent that meaningful dialogues about metropolitan governance also could not avoid the passions which go with political partisanship, or personalities of elected leaders--the leaders are suggesting that some of the major desirable changes have to take a route which bypasses the institutional order of our society, a route outside, and possibly against, the establishment. This may turn out to be altogether true. In this connection, perhaps I may be permitted to identify at least three major factors which emerge from the research, and which must be construed as perceived obstacles to desirable changes.

First and foremost, the community leaders tend to be quite disenchanted with politics, politicians and political organizations, both Republican and Democratic. This attitude permeates the responses on just about all items, and there is no single instance in which the workings of the existing political order would be identified as avenues to betterment. In each case, the comments are negative. It seems especially crucial to emphasize that these are views not of one or another group of extremists, of one or another group of people with little or no access to power, but attitudes of prominent community leaders who, by definition, have a great deal of power and influence over the affairs of the community. At the minimum, this represents a clear-cut and definite challenge to "politics as usual," and heralds demands for reforms within the political system lest much less predictable changes be imposed upon it from without, changes often borne out of the passions of the day.

The second major issue which I would like to mention briefly has to do with the pessimism of many of the community leaders. If the aggregate view justified an interpretation, as is stated in the summary, of "modest optimism," almost half of the leaders actually manifest a good deal of pessimism: the needed things will not get done, Pittsburgh will continue stagnating or will, in fact, deteriorate.

This is invariably connected with the dissatisfaction with the political order. But there is more to this issue than that. In its implications, it is exceptionally disturbing. For the participants in this phase of the Goals Study are individuals in important positions in the community to begin with. They are precisely the kinds of people that might get things done, or, at least, people who can have greater effect than citizens at large.

If many of these community leaders believe that desirable things cannot be accomplished, who is to be optimistic? Who, furthermore, is to get them initiated, and perhaps done, if not those individuals who have acceded to positions of prominence?

The third major issue concerns the feeling that a leadership vacuum seems to exist in Pittsburgh. I am not referring to the leadership which may come through the election process in the community, but the kind of inspirational and catalytic leadership that links patterns of governance with the larger body politic of the community. In this regard, many of the community leaders mention the absence of, and need for, leaders of the Richard King Mellon type. They do not see such leadership emerging anywhere at this particular time.

But if these are some of the key impediments which the research suggests, let me also cite the major facilitators. There are, indeed, good things to be said.

We find these leaders deeply concerned with the future of the community. This cannot but be extremely helpful in any effort at mobilizing the precious human resources of the community in its search for means by which to upgrade the quality of life in our whole area.

These leaders are highly receptive to change. This, too, seems very salutory. There is thus very little in the way of interests which would be so entrenched as to seek to maintain the status quo either because it is, itself, seen as satisfying or because of the ever-present risks associated with uncertain consequences of change.

We find these leaders in agreement with each other in terms of the main directions which changes in Pittsburgh ought to take. This

pattern of consensus would also seem to be a factor facilitating development because it permits us to deploy our energies and our know-how chiefly in the direction of identifying viable ways of getting things done, instead of having to mainly convince each other about what it is that needs doing.

There are, of course, at any time numerous things that may need doing, and far too often, limitations or resources--human, physical as well as financial--make it impossible to attend to all of them, or at least, to deal with all of them equally well or at an appropriate pace or at the same time. Thus questions of relative priorities are always as salient as they are bothersome.

Now, I don't know, of course, what the future will be like. But I do know that desires and wishes alone will not make for betterment. And I do know that good intentions and good words will also not in and of themselves produce a world that we would prefer over the present one. I also know that our actions today, individually and collectively, together, independent of one another, and even against one another, are the forces out of which the shape of tomorrow will emerge. In turn, these present actions depend very much on what we <u>want</u> to see happen, what we <u>want</u> to prevent, and what we <u>expect</u> and why, and on the resources of all kinds which are available to us to invest in the various alternative directions. Indeed, our present actions do depend on our perspectives regarding the future.

And the future is, indeed,what it is all about. We are not victims of an implacable destiny. We are its makers.